



4.

THE
STAY
OF THE
FAITHFULL:

Together with
THE PROPERTIES
of an honest HEART.

In two Sermons.

2 Tim. i. 12.

*I know whom I have beleaved,
and am fully perswaded, that
he is able to keep that, which I
have committed to him.*

LONDON.

Printed by M. F. for R. Dawl-
man, and are to be sold by
Thomas Nichols in Popes-
head Alley at the sign
of the Bible. 1638.

*Iosiah, sonne of Ammon
King of Iudea, at what
time Ieremiah, and Zepha-
niab, did both of them
joyne together, to pro-
nounce to the people in
the Name of the Lord
utter destruction; I will
utterly (saith he) consume
all things from off the
land.*

In the 2 *verse* of this Chapter, when the Holy Ghost did see some remants of corruption left in the time of reformati-
on, he did looke at them as so many seeds of fu-
ture desolation. And therefore both these ho-
ly Prophets, *Ieremiah* in his 25. *Chap.* and *Zepha-
niab* in his whole Pro-
phecie,

phesie, they doe joyne together, to the pronouncing of Gods threatening for the utter confusion of face of all the people, and their sinnes.

The causes whereof Zephany readreth at large together with the maner of the judgements, in the former Chapter.

And in the beginning of the 2. Chap. hec doth in consideration thereof, turne his speech to both sorts of people; both such a part of the Nation as defised not after God; some that had no part in Religion, or the reformation of Iosiah; as likewise to those that were the *meekes of the earth*; I say,

say, he turpes his speech
to both, in dire&ing them
what course they should
each take, for the avoid-
ing of those mischieves
that did hang over their
heads.

To that part of the na-
tion that was not now de-
fired, hee directs this
counsell in the first and
second *verses* of this
Chap. Gather your selves
together, or as it is in the
Originall, Fanne your
selves, for either of both
it will signifie, Gather up
your selves from that
loosenesse, and dissolute-
nesse that heretofore you
have beene addicted to.
Gather up your selves, oh
Nation not desired; and
here

here he presseth upon the
the Duty, from an Argu-
ment taken from the
hasting on, and break-
ing in of Gods decree ;
*Before the Decree come
forth, and you passe as the
chaffe, &c.*

Having thus advised
those of the Nation that
had no desire after Reli-
gion, nor God; after them,
he turns his speech to
the meeke of the earth, in
the third verse, which I
have now read : Where-
in first he describesthem,
secondly counsells them,
and then encourageth
them to take his counsel.

He describes them by
their quality, or vertue of
meekenesse, and that in an

H emi

eminent measure ; Yee
mecke of the earth ; seeke
the Lord all yee mecke of
the earth.

He describes them fur-
ther by their course of
life ; which have wrought
judgement (saith he) that
is, which have framed
your course of life accor-
ding to the way , and
meanes, and Law of God ;
who have framed you
selves, and your families
and the rest under your
hands after the will of
the Almighty : These are
the men hee speakes to in
this verse :

And the counsell he
gives them, is to seeke :

First, *The Lord.*

Secondly, *Righteousnes.*

And

And then Meeknesse.

Seeke the Lord (saith he) y^t the meeke of the earth, and seeke righteousnesse : Though they were the meeke of the earth before, yet seeke meekness still ; that meekenesse whereby they might moderate, and mortifie their base lusts, and vile thoughts, and affections of anger, griefe, hatred, &c. for meeknesse moderates all these ; I say the meeknesse that is here spoken of ; Seeke the Lord all yee meeke of the earth :

Thus you see first, to whom the Prophet speaks.

Secondly, you see what counsell hee gives them,

H 2. 10

to seeke the Lord, to seeke
righteousnesse, to seeke
meeknesse.

And then wee see fur-
ther, the reason that hee
gives of all, to encourage
them to this work, and
that taken from a possibi-
lity of their security in
the time of vengeance.

*It may bee you may bee hid
in the day of the Lords an-
ger; seeke the Lord, seeke
righteousnesse, &c.*

These words therefore
are to be considered;

First, as a promise given
to such as are meek ones,
and that have wrought
judgement, and that doe
seeke the Lord. The pro-
mise made to them is this,
*It may bee, you shall bee hid
in*

in the day of the Lords wrath. You see hee doth not speake peremptorily, You shall assuredly bee hid, though God could have said so, but *it may be* you shall be hid from the destroying Angel.

And secondly, consider these words as they are brought as an Argument to stir up the meeke of the earth, to seeke the Lord, and to seeke righteouſneſſe; for ſo you are to take them, both as a pro- position in themſelves, and as they are a pro- position from whence this inference is gathered. Therefore ſeeke the Lord all yee meeke of the earth. Both theſe conſiderati-

ons doe offer to us a dou-
ble Note.

Let me speake of them
both shortly, as Gods
assistance and the time
will give leave.

The first Note you
may obserue hence is
this ; That

Doct.

*In times of publike dan-
ger, God is wont to leave
even his owne meeke ones,
that have wrought justice.*

I say, God leaves his
meeke ones, that is, his
owne children, and such
of them to, as are better
nurtured then others; for
every child of God is not
endued with that mee-
kness of spirit as some o-
thers be; yet I say it is
Gods manner of dealing,
some.

sometimes to leave his meekest servants in times of publike danger, at much uncertainty, what shall become of them.

This is evident in the Text ; *Seeke thee Lord all the meeke of the earth, that have wrought judgement ; You that were transcendently meeke, that carried the name of meeke-nesse all the countrey, and all the earth over ; such as had not beene used to run riot, but had wrought judgement, and had carried themselves well and wisely, had ordered themselves and their families, and whatsoever was theirs, those that he exhorts to seeke righte-*

H 4 ousnesse,

ousnesse, and to seeke
meeknesse, and judge-
ment; and when they
have done all that hee
would have them to doe,
this is all the incourage-
ment hee gives them af-
ter all; *It may be you shall*
be hid, &c. hee doth not
say, In hiding you shall
be hid, or certainly you
shall be safe, but *it may be*
you shall bee hid in the
day of the Lords anger.

Let me make good this
truth to you from other
Scriptures: When God
was about to bring (as I
may say) that doomy
day, *Ioel 2.* upon that
Church and State, a day
of blacknesse and dark-
nesse, *Thou must, saith he,*
turne

turne to the Lord, even to me, with all thine heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning: Rend your hearts and not your garments, let every one turne from the evill that is in his hand: for who can tell whether the Lord will returne, and leave a blessing behinde him, Joel 2. 12, 13. as if he should say, It may bee he will, it is not certaine that he will doe so: at the least, wee cannot say it is peremptorily concluded, but whether hee doe or no, doe you turne to the Lord with all your heart, and put away the evill that is among you, it may bee the Lord may returne & leave a blessing behind him.

H 5 When

Joel 2. 12,
13.

Ex. 32.30.

When as Moses did expect that some grievous judgement would fall upon the Nation of Israel in regard of their golden Calves ; Now indeed, saith hee, you have committed a grievous and a great sinne, nevertheless I will returne and goe up into the Mount to the Lord, and make intercession for you, peradventure the Lord may accept mee that you perish not, Exod. 32. 30. peradventure the Lord will : Thus you see, God leaves the Church at an uncertainty, at a hazard what hee will doe with them ; It may be, he will bee found of them, but if hee bee, it is more then

then the people knew ;
*Peradventure I may in-
treat God that you pe-
rish not, saith he.*

And so when G O D comes to talke mouth to mouth with his people (or at the least to *Moses*, that he might deliver his word to the people) *Exod. 33.5.* The Lord said to *Moses*, say to *Israel*, *You are a stiffe-necked peo-
ple, I will come into the
midst of you in a moment,
and consume you ; there-
fore saith God, Pull off
thine ornaments that I may
know what to doe with
thee ; As if so bee, when
God was so provoked,
that he saw just reason to
bring destruction upon
them,*

Exo.33.5.

them ; yet even then, hee would not so resolutely, and peremptorily expresse himselfe, that they should see no hope of deliverance ; neither would hee say upon their repentence, that hee would deliver them.

Onely put off your ornaments, and lay aside those things by which you solace and adorne your selves, that I may know what to doe with thee, that I may cause you to see what course it is that I will take : Hee shewes that God would not expresse himselfe plainly, that hee would not evidently speake out, but leaves it at some uncertainty

tainty to the best people of his owne, be it *Aaron*, or *Hur*, or *Iosiah*, who soever it was among them, none should know what hee would doe ; Even the *Levites* that stood for God, and stood against the evills that the people brought upon themselves, yet notwithstanding they should not know what the Lord would doe with them, or with the Nation together.

Sometimes indeed *God* speaks punctually, and expressely to a people what hee will doe, and what a speciall care hee will take of his servants in ill times ; Saith *God* to *Baruch*,

Ier.45.5.

Ier.39.

Barnuch, Dost thou seeke great things for thy selfe, seeke them not, I will plant and plucke up, I build and pull downe, but seeke not thou great things, thou shalt have thy life for a prey, Jer.45.5. And you know what message God sent to *Abimelech* the *Ethiopian* by *Ieremiah*, that had done a good office in the Court for the Prophet of God, *Ier. 39.* *I will surely deliver thee, thou shalt have thy life for a prey;* Thus G O D sometimes speaks, and speaks freely, and comforts them, that he will assuredly deliver them, and hide them in the day of his wrath.

God

God expressely tells his people, *Ezek. 11.16.* that hee will bee a *little sanctuary* unto them in all places wheresoever they should be disposed of any of them ; he would bee a little sanctuary among the Heathen , whither hee would carry them, and scatter them : It is a word of great encouragement, when it pleaseth God to expresse himselfe thus, but you see sometimes he speaks not so, but contents himselfe with these kinde of generall and doubtfull words ; *It may be you shall bee hid in the day of the Lords wrath :* So that in times of publicke danger, such as these, where-

wherein Zephany threatened utter destruction of the Nation in regard of some defects in Iosiah's reformation, when hee had stirred up all sorts, and especially *the meek of the earth* to thorow repentence, all the encouragement that hee gives even to the best is this, *It may be you shall be hid, &c.*

Doe not tell me, that this word (*it may be*) hath some farther comfortable meaning in it, than I now speak of, reaching to more than a *peradventure*, or *it may be*; for though that be true, as I shal have occasion afterward to speak, yet certainly God tem-

tempereth his speech in the Prophet according to what he meaneth his Spirit shall speak to the consciences of his people. He will many times expresse himselfe no farther, than that they may have opportunity to ask one another, what shall become of them? what shall wee doe now in such and such a time? what course shall we take? or what think you will be the end of these things? this is all many times that God will suffer his people to reach unto, and therefore he expresteth himselfe in that language, in the tenure of these words, *It may be you shall be hid, &c.*

Would

Would you now know the reason why God will speak so in times of publique danger, when his people seeke his face, and walk themselves meekly and judiciously, & faithfully in their places, and renew their covenant with him, seeking him in every duty, and in every ordinance that hee gives them opportunity to partake of? why doth not God speak more plainly to them, but leave them thus at large, *It may be you shall be hid, &c*? what should be the reason of this manner of Gods speaking?

Reas. I.

The first reason of this kind of dealing of God, is taken

taken from the strong hand that many times Gods best servants have in publicque sinnes and calamities: his dearest ones many times have a hand in setting an end publicque sins, and therefore God thinks it not meet to honour them so far, as to reveale to them expreſſly what his holy pleasure is about them. Reade (and it is worth your reading) what the holy Ghost delivereth, *Mich. 1. 4, 5.* where the Lord threatneth that he will *come downe, and the mountaines shall be molten under him.* Hee meaneth by *mountaines, the great men of the Kingdome, as they*

Mic. 1.4,5.

Psal. 72. 3.

they are called so, *Psal. 72. 3.* The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills righteousness to the people. Men in higher place shall provide for the peace of the subjects; there shall not be the meanest officer, nor the least molehill in place, but he shall bring righteousness to the people, hee shall be no exactor, but a righteous dealer, *Psal. 72. 3.*

Psal. 72. 3.

The mountains therefore being the great men of a Kingdome, it is said of them in this place of *Micah*, they shall be molten under him as waxe before the fire, that is, there shall be no settledness nor constancy

stancy in their waies, they shall not stand as mountaines, but as *mountaines of wax* that are easily dissolved, and are running away from their consistence. And what shall become of *the valleys*? he tells you for the valleys, that is, for *the lower sort of people*, they shall be cleft or divided: and hee tells you how, even as *waters* that are poured from a steepe place. Waters that runne high, though they be carried in a great stremme, when they be united together, there is a great force in them; yet when they fall downe from a steepe place, then, saith God, *they are cleft in sun-der*,

der, and one drop is divided from another, and they have a great deale of weaknesse; they are of no power at all, when they are cleft asunder: such shall be the *valleys*: the lower sort of people shall be as waters that fal from a high place, that are cleft in sunder, and so divided into small parts, and little drops, that there shall be no power or strength in any of them.

Now whence comes all this, that the *mountains* shall melt as waxe, and that the *valleyes* shall cleave as waters from a steepe place? God gives the reason in *vers. 5.* and it is a very strong expression

sion that the holy Ghost useth, saith hee, *For the transgression of Iacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel.* Whence commeth all this ? did not all these waters runne when they were in high places compact together, or were not the mountains themselves unsetled in their disposition ? No surely faith God, that is not the matter ; or whatsoever is the matter, this is the root of it, *For the transgression of my people is all this, and for the sin of the house of Israel.* All this was for Gods peoples sake that lived in the Church of Jerusalem and Judea ; for their sakes all this

this comes to passe, that the mountaines melt like waxe, and the valleys are cleft as waters that fall from a steep place.

When *David* arose, and would needs have the *people* numbered, to the provoking of *Gods* wrath, what saith the holy Ghost upon it, what was the cause of it, that so good a man after *Gods* own heart should so much mistake himselfe, and the safety of his people, as to number them at such a time ? Saith the Text, *2 Sam. 24.* *The wrath of the Lord was provoked against Israel, and hee stirred up David to number the people. The provocations of Israel*

Israel provoked God to stir up *David* to take such a course, as should bring a plague that swept away seventy thousand of them: So that you see for the iniquities of *Jacob*, and for the finnes of the house of Israel is all that evill that at any time befalls a Church or Commonwealth, and therefore it is not meet that GOD should speak all his mind plainly to those, at the least not alway, that have had their hands so much imbrued in the very sins and miseries of the times themselves.

As when the stomach is annoyed with troublesome vapours and humors,

Simile.

mors, they easily strike into the head: even so it fared with this people. It is in every Commonwealth, as it was in *David's* Common-wealth; Israel had provoked God a thousand to one, that that people at that time were sick of the very same disease that *David* laboured on, for they began to swell in the multitude of their people, and in the strégh of that multitude, and the great suc-cesse which God had gi-ven *David*; hee had fought many great bat-tels when they instead of thankfulness and mee-kness of heart, began to have swelling and proud-

con-

conceits, these struck into the head, and *David* had such an apprehension too: and so hee takes a course to bring a heavy hand of God upon himselfe, and his people; *for the iniquity of the house of Jacob is all this.*

When as God would render a reason why he divided the Kingdome of *Solomon*, and parted ten Tribes of it to *Ieroboam* his servant; *Abijah* tells him the reason, because *Solomon* had thus and thus provoked God with *Ashtaroch* and *Baal*, and some others, as it is ¹*Kings* 11.31,32,33. As if he should say, the people of God, even his owne

I 2 elect

¹*King. 11.*
31,32,33.

ele& and chosen servants, their sinnes many times provoke God to make the greatest changes and alterations that are at any time wrought either in a Church or Commonwealth.

When the *holy Ghost* would tell you a reason of that great change in the Christian world, whē the *fourre Angels* should be loosed from the river *Euphrates*, as the most Interpreters (not onely the most judicious, but generally others) take it, whē he would shew the reason why God let loose the *Turkes* and *Sarakins*, a barbarous people, to overcome all the Church

of

of Israel, to make waste and desolate all the Sanctuary of God, I mean all the blessed Congregations of Christians; when he would render a reason of this, hee tels us in the latter end, hee would stir up a brutish people, that had eyes and see not, that had ears and heare not, that had mouths and speake not, but were rather *images* and trunks of men then men; a *barbarous nation*, that were rather bulks of men then had any spirits in them.

The reason was, because the *Christian world*, Gods own servants, were growne devout in the worshipping of *images*, for

I 3 yet

Rev. 9.14.

yet faith hee, they turned not from their gods of gold, and of wood, and iron, and of stone, wherewith they had provoked God, and so hee caused a barbarous Nation to triumph over them, *Revel. 9. 14.* So that you shall finde this ever to bee true, that the very sinnes of GODS Church, especially the Ele&t, have commonly shattered al the good that otherwise they might have found in their places where they be.

I consider now where I speake, for I would bee loath to speake so where every man should apprehend mee, that the servants of GOD are the greatest

greatest trespassers in a Kingdome, and that their finnes are greater then other mens be. God forbid that I should thinke so, or that any should believe it so ; but my meaning is to let Gods servants know, a great number wherof I hope heare me this day, that whatsoeuer the finnes of a Common-wealth bee, God regards not all the prophannesse, and all the wickednesse that is in a Common-wealth ; God lesse regards it, although the sinne be fouler, then hee doth even small failings in his owne servants, whose examples are such as doe leade on

I 4 further

further evills in a Church and Common-wealth, to the destruction both of themselves and others.

Would you know the reason why it pleased *God* to send a sore famine upon the land of *Canaan*, that should reach likewise to *Egypt*, so that almost there was no bread to be found six yeares together; The first yeare they made a shift, but then all their provision was spent, and the next yeare they must hasten to *Egypt* if they would live; *Why stand you gazing one upon another*, saith *Jacob*, *get you downe into Egypt and buy food*; It shewes that there was no food to be

be had but there. What
thinke you was the cause
of that great distresse up-
on those two Nations
Canaan, and Egypt? none
could bee found: though
the people were but smal,
yet the Nations were
great. Doubtlesse, for
the iniquty of the house of
Jacob was that, and for the
sin of the sonnes Israel.

Because they dealt *cru-*
elly with Ioseph, and sold
him, it was necessary that
they should follow him,
and goe all into *Egypt* af-
ter him; and it was ne-
cessary that they should
goe by this meanes, and
that captivity should
bring them all to repen-
tance; *Ioseph* so wisely
I 5 orde-

ordering the matter with his brethren, he handled them so, that he left none till hee had brought all their hearts low, by such a gracious and sweet frame, that if there were any meanes under heaven of their conversion, it was his conference and the course that hee tooke with them to shew them their sinne, and to bring them on to repentance.

So in a word, you that are acquainted with the Histories of the Common-wealths, with the greatest Monarchies that ever the world saw, do you but observe them, and (you shall never understand them well, except

cept you reade Scriptures with them) you ſhall finde that the greatest Monarchies in the world have beeue advanced, either for ſcourges to Gods Church, or else for the deliverance of his people: For your ſakes, ſaith he, it is that I ſet up Babylon, and pull it downe, *Eſay 43.14.* because thou wast precious in my fight, and honourable, I have given Nations for thee, *verſe 3.* The reaſon of all Gods Providence o- ver the world is for his Church; and S. Paul telſ you, that whether it bee *Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas,* or the world, or whatſo- ever, all is yours, *1 Cor.*

1ſai 43.14.

Verſe 3.

3.23.

1 Cor. 3.
22.

3.22. and you are Christs
and Christ is Gods ; God
so orders all States and
Common-wealths, and
the great Monarchs of
the world, all their tur-
nings to and fro, all are
ordered so farre as God
sees may bee for the
Churches good.

The Church many
times is accounted a *little*
flocke, and so it is, and is
meanely esteemed in the
world, but God hath ever
that eye to it, that for the
Churches sake he *especi-*
ally alters all the States,
not in Christendome on-
ly, but in the world.

That is the first reason,
why God doth thus hold
off his people from
knowing

knowing what hee will doe with them, because it is for their sakes, for their sinnes, that it comes to passe, that the King-domes in which they live are exposed to so much danger, and therefore it is meet, that first they should better consider themselves, before they know what the Lord will doe with them.

And a second reason may be this, That so hee might give them occasion something further to humble themselves before him, to lament their owne sinne, and to mourn for the sins of the times in which they live, and then **G O D** is wont to speake

Reas. 2.

Ezek. 4.

speake more comfort ; I, *Ezek. 4.* when as his people had mourned in secret, for all the abominations of the place they lived in, then God sends a man to *marke* them in *their foreheads*, and because that was but secret, *among the angels*, that is, among the Leaders of the *Babylonian Host* (for that I make account is the Prophets meaning, hee would send his angell with the *Babylonian Army*,) yet they were so guided, that victorious Nation that they hurt none of them upon whom the *marke* was set, yet hee rests himselfe not with that, but hee bids the Pro-

phet tell them, that hee
would bee a sanctuary
to them that did thus
moure.

Iosias began to reform
most comfortably, and
gloriously, so that the
hearts of Gods people
were refreshed marvel-
lously, seeing so *young a*
Prince, so hopefull, such
an instrument of Gods
service; they little con-
sidered the danger of the
remnant that was left, as
the Prophet speaks in the
beginning of the *third*
Chapter of this Prophe-
sie, 4, 5, 6. *verses*, they
little confidered that they
had not yet begun to
mourne in *Sion* for the
abominations, but their
meuthes

Chap. 3.
ver. 4,5,6.

mouthes were full of thanksgiving, and their hearts were full of praises, and it may bee there was a little pride joyned with it too, to see so happy a state of Church and Cōmon-wealth as there was, and therefore God will not tell them what hee will doe in the times of publike calamity; they must looke backe to what they have done, or else they shall be uncertaine. Other reasons I might give you of this point, but I should hold you over long if I so did; And therefore because there is some thing further remaines to bee spoken, let me in a word make use of this. And

And it may serve to teach Gods servants, e-ven Gods owne elect people, *the meeke ones of the earth*, you that have wrought some judge-ment (taking judgement as the Hebrew phrase doth, for the right ordering of your selves and yours) I say, you are in the times of publike danger, when-foever your hearts put you to such stands and questions as these bee ; What shall we now doe ? or, what thinke you will become of us ? or, what will the issue of this bee ? Bee sure then to begin to thinke what the reason is, why God doth not speak plainly to you, that in de-livering

delivering he will deliver you, and hide you, what-soever become of the body of the Nation ; why doth not God, or your owne hearts say thus, or one of you speake so to another ? see if it bee not because your selves have had some hand in the publike evils of the times that wee com plaine of so much. It behoves Gods people in a speciall manner to have an eye to that as ever you desire to see good dayes, and to bee secure and protected in the evill houre, be carefull that you doe not onely mourne for the sinnes of the time you live in, that *God* may say to you ;

hee

hee will bee a little san-
ctuary to you whereso-
ver you come, but bee
sure you come to this
passe, to see what iniqui-
ty in you might cause all
those ills, that you feare
at any time.

Never trouble you
your selves so much with
the sins of others, what-
soever they may bee,
though they be never so
hainous, and never so
monstrous, but labour to
bee exercised with your
owne; for though God
require that his servants
should bee humbled for
all the abominations that
their eyes see, and that
their ears heare, yet the
first care that hee would
have

have us take is, to pull the beame out of our own eye, that wee pull sinne and iniquity out of our own hearts, whereby the Common-wealth wherein wee doe, or may live, is like to fare the worse for our sakes.

The time was, when the enemies invaded the Kingdome of *Iudea*, in *Iehosaphats* reigne, but it was in a very unhappy season for themselves, as in the Chapter before ap- pears, 2 Chron. 19. you shall reade that *Iehosaphat* had sent his Nobles, and the Priests through all the Cities of *Iudah*, and planted faithfull *Le- vites* to teach the people the

the counsell of God, and Judges, and Officers to execute judgement. Now in the 17. and 19. Chapters, and in the beginning of the 20. Chapter, it comes to passe that there the Holy Ghost tells us of a great company of Nations, as thick as the sands on the Sea for multitude come and invade *Iudah*; they come in a poore time for their own ends, for they were no sooner ready to invade the Church, but upon the prayers of *Iehosaphat* all their Souldiers turne one against anothers sides, and without any stroake of the King of *Iudah*, or his Souldiers, they fell as dirt

2 Chron.
20.

dirt upon the earth, and perished as dung, 2 Chron. 20. But surely had they found the State and Church in worse order, then it might have beene feared what the issue of that warre would have beene.

2 Chron.
30.31.

Reade the like of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 30.31. hee spent his endeavour strongly in the reasoning of things amisse, both in the Church and Common-wealth, and in setting the Ordinances of God in their purity, saith the Text; But after these things, and the establishing thereof (marke that phrase) comes Zenachrib with an Hoast of

2 Chron.
31.

one

one hundred eighty five thousand against the people ; but alas, hee comes in an evill time, for his owne purpose, for hee takes the Church of *God* when it was in good order, when they did seeke *Gods* face, every one reforming his evill way, and turning from the corruption that was in their hearts, and hands, and we see all his purposes were broken, and dashed to pieces, and if there had been tenne hundred times ten thousand that had come againe and againe, they had broken themselves against the Church, as water is broken against a Rocke, at

at that time.

But when the people of God are found in their failings, and in their sins, then the enemies that are strong, they prevail mightily, they goe on conquering with great successse, and all because there is something that God sees amisse in his owne servants; they had need to bee taught, and need to bee nurtured, to see their owne failings better, that so their iniquities might not be their owne ruine, nor hurt the place, or Commonwealth where they live in.

So long as ever the people of God did feare,

even

ven the appearance of
will this way, and the
skirts and circumstances
of superstition in this
ind, so long there was
ever any such feare of
rawing on any such he-
sicc in doctrine, any such
uperstition, and Idola-
ry, and false worship as
hince hath invaded the
Church: but through the
inclination of Gods peo-
ple to tolerate them-
selves in this circum-
ance, and that circum-
ance leading to super-
stition, to corruption in
doctrine, or to the gui-
dance and government
of the affaires of the
Church, from that hath
prung whatsoever dan-

K ger

ger and feare it is that ^{as} you _{are} of you are now exercising the he
with all.

And therefore certai
ly God first lookes ^{into} hearts
this, that you in the p ^{re} the liv
fence of the Lord, see ones,
more righteousness, a ^{re} earth,
more judgement, a ^{re} of sp
that wee humble ^{ourselves} times
soules more, each soule feare
of us before the Lord ^{standi}
that so there may not be see, t
that in Gods owne p speed
ple that may cause ^{to} breac
thus to wheele about ^{to} fie with
whole fabrick of ^{the} sin
State, as some times ^{of} the c
doth, and indeed oft. ^{time.}

For mine owne par
would not feare all ^{the} one in
crying and hainous sin ^{ther}, t
that at any time, any ^{the} w

that you groan under, were
the hearts of Gods peo-
ple tender, our judge-
ments cleare, and our
hearts cleansed; were
the p[ro]p[ri]etary lives of Gods chosen
ones, *the meeke ones of the*
earth, set to such a frame
of spirit, as God some-
times gives, I would not
so feare but that notwith-

standing all the sins you
not see, there would bee a
speedy healing of all our
breaches: For it is as ea-
sie with God to change
the sinnes of the time, as
the calamities of the
time. It is an easie mat-
ter with him to knock off
all one instrument after ano-
ther, till he have brought
any the whole body of the

K 2 Church

Church and State quietly and safely to such a blessed frame of things, as that the mountaine might bring peace, and the little hills joy to God's people; And till God's chosen ones take some care with their own hearts this way, that nothing may fume up from them, there will be little hope that ever you shall see the Common-wealth and the State in order, otherwise then your selves with grief perhaps see it.

Thinke not that the people of God are a small number, and are little considering others. In truth it may bee they are so in the eyes of men

but I tell you they are all that God consideris in the world, hee consideris not all the world besides in comparison of them, and upon the healing of the judgement, or the practise of his servants, it is as usuall with God to do as great matters as ever were seene in the earth, and certainly he will doe as great matters in the world still for the healing of them. That is the first thing; Gods people must seriously advise with themselves.

Secondly, after they have healed themselves, they must mourne for the abominations of the place they live in, and say

2 Chron.

as Ichosaphat, Wee know not what to doe, but our eyes are to thee, O Lord. God oft holds his people in suspense (for this reaso) that their eyes might bee to him, when they have ordered their spirits aright, to see the Holy One of Israel: when their eyes are upon him, as the eye of a servant is upon his Master. and as the eye of a maid is on her Mistris, then hee will doe it, that we shall see his salvation; wee shall never need to lay our hands to the worke, God will worke it, you shall strike no stroake, for the battell is the Lords and not yours; God will provide that, though

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though the enemies be as mountains, they shall be cleft as waters that fall from a steep rock. So much shall serve to have spoken of the first.

There is a second point remaines, let mee briefly handle it, and it is this : *That the possibility of the security of Gods people, (or if you will give me leave to speak it as I desire to doe with that reverence as becommeth the word, take it thus :) The halfe promises of God for the security, or touching the security of his people is a sufficient reason, and ought to be an effectuall motive to us to renew our repentance, faith and obedience, and*

K 4 patience.

patience. Let me shew you all out of the words.

First, *halfe promises* I call such as this in the Text, *It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's wrath*: for there are two things that goe to the accomplishment of a promise:

One is the power of him that made it.
The other is his will in performing it.

God tells us of his power that it is possible, it may be done, *It may be*; he tells us not certainly, *In hiding I will hide you*, but *It may be*; that is onely an expression of his power: and you have many such expressions in Scripture, you

you may take notice of them if you please, and you shall find it helpfull in opening of many Scriptures: you shall find these halfe promises expressed three wayes in Scripture.

Sometimes God onely expresseth his *power*, and not his *will* at all. As whē *Amaziah* asked the Prophet what should become of his hundred talents of silver that hee had given for souldiers, *2 Chron. 25.*

9. The King had hired a hundred thousand souldiers of Israel, with an hundred talents of silver, that they might fight for him. The Prophet and God too tooke it ill that

2 Chron.
25. 9.

K5 he

hee should hire such kind of men, God is not at peace with all: and therefore send them home, saith he: but what shall I doe for the silver? (saith the King) all is lost, they will never give it mee againe. Take no care, saith the Prophet, God is able to give it thee againe: this is a half promise, because here is an expression of Gods power, but not of his will.

In like manner S. Paul exhorts the Corinthians that they would be bountifull to the poore Saints at Ierusalem; why so? Saith he, My God is able to fulfill all your necessities according to his rich pleasure.

sure, 2 Cor. 8.9. Here is a halfe promise, and the A-
postle thinks it a suffi-
cient encouragement to
them.

Sometimes God ex-
presseth these promises
another way, with words
of contingency and un-
certainty, as when hee
saith in the Text, *It may
be, or Who can tell whether
the Lord will returne, and
leave a blessing behind
him?* Joel 2. 14. Or as
there is the like of Nine-
veh, *Who knowes whether
the Lord will returne and
repent, that we perish not?*
*Jonah 3.8.9. Who knows?
Who can tell?* these are
words of contingencie.

Sometimes God ex-
presseth

presseth these halfe promises with a condition, with a three-fold condition.

Sometimes on Gods part, *If the Lord love us and delight in us, he will bring us unto that good land*, Num. 14.8. *If the Lord take pleasure in me, and if I have found favour with him, he will bring me to the Arke, that I may see it and the Tabernacle*, 2 Sam. 15. 25, 26. Here is a promise with a condition of favour on Gods part.

Sometimes the condition is on our part, *If thy sonnes walke in my statutes and doe them, &c.* 1 Kings 9. 4, 5, 6. This is a promise

Num. 14.8

2 Sam. 15.
25, 26.

mise with condition on our part.

Sometimes the condition depends upon the part of the thing promised; as when God promiseth a thing in case it be good for us, *And no good thing will bee with-hold,* *Psal. 84.11.*

Psal. 84.11

Now all these kind of promises, whether God expresse his power only, or both his *power* and his *will* in a contingent manner, or if God promise with a condition on his part, or on our part, or on the part of the things themselves, all these I account *halfe promises*, because they are not absolute and certaine to us.

Againe,

Againe, all of them are such as ought to be effectuall motives to stir us up to all duties.

For first, let me prove it from the Text. When Zephany exhorts them to seeke the Lord, that is the duty of repentance; for no man will seeke the Lord, but he that feeles a want of him: no man seekes but for that that he feeles the need of in some measure, either altogether, or in part; therefore hee exhorts them to *repentance*, and hee exhorts them to *faith* in their *repentance*; for no man seekes the Lord, till by *faith* we have found him; *repentance* seeks him, but *seeking*

seeking by faith findes him.

And to seek judgement and meeknesse, implies a practice of the duties of obedience; *Judgement and meeknesse*, that is, patience and mildnesse of spirit in all dangers that befall us. Seek all these: upon what ground? *It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lords wrath.* So that you see this is and ought to be a sufficient reason, or else the Lord would not use it: the holy Ghost useth this reason, who cannot but reason divinely and effectually, and therefore surely the reason is forcible & good, if it be rightly apprehended.

But

But I might bring many examples for all. Doth not *Ioel* exhort the people to turne to the Lord with fasting, weeping, & mourning? *Who can tell*, faith he, *whether the Lord will leave a blessing behind him*? Hee exhorts them to the duty of repentance and humiliation upon this ground, upon a halfe promise, *Who can tell, &c.* So concerning the silver, *2 Chron. 25. God is able to give thee more*, therefore thou must obey. *God is able to doe it*, he doth not say *he will doe it*, and it may be he never did, (for the Kings heart was not right with the Lord) but *he is able to doe it*, and he would

2 Chr. 25.

would have his will fulfilled, whether hee did or no.

And so the King of Nineveh, he turned from his evill wayes, and exhorted all the people to doe so, to repent and reforme. Why ? Who can tell but that the Lord will repent of the evill ? *Ionah 3.8.*

3. 8.

It is a wondrous help to the faith of a Christian, when he sees there is a power in God to helpe him: for *Iehosaphat* works upon that, *Our eyes are upon thee, and thou hast given this Nation to Abraham, &c.* and it is all one with God to save with many or few, therefore wee waite upon

upon thee for deli-
rance.

So Moses, he turnes to
God, and renewes his hu-
miliation before him
with a *peradventure I shal
find favour at the hands of
God, Exod. 32.*

Exod. 32.

And for the patience
of Gods people, and their
constancy and obedience
together, we have a spe-
ciall example, *Dan. 3.17.*
*Oh King, wee are not care-
full to answer thee in this
matter : our God whom we
serve is able to deliver us,
and he will deliver us out
of thy hands : but if not,*
*&c. Marke, they begin to
conceive a possibility that
he could, and some incli-
nation of his will towards
it,*

Dan. 3.17.

it, but if not, know that we will not fall downe before thine Image. They strengthened themselves in their courage and obedience, by faith in the Almighty.

The servants of God have ever been wrought upon, though they have had but a conditionall promise, though they have had but a peradventure for their encouragement, It may be, it is possible, though they have had no more but a possibility, it hath stayed their faith, and renewed their repentance, and quickned their obedience, and framed them to patience & meeknesse, and all holy sub-

Why halfe
promises
are so effe-
ctuall.

Reas. I.

submission upon this ground, *It may be* the Lord will doe this and that for us, thus returning to him.

What might be the reason why this expression of God, when hee makes but a *halfe promise*, is and ought to be such an effectuall argument to stay the soule?

The reason of it briefly is taken, First from the true meaning of God, when he expresseth himselfe thus: though he tell them, *It may be* you shall be hid, yet he meanes you shall *certainly* be hid, and I will undoubtedly deliver you. For though hee speaks thus ambiguously, and

and accordingly reports it to the consciences of his people, and leaves them in suspence, that they shall not know what good hee will doe with them, at the least till they have purged out those evils that have provoked him to displeasure, and have humbled themselves for their failings.

Yet the very truth is, whensoever God speaks, *It may be, that very may be* is a certainty in the language of the holy Ghost: So *Ioel* interprets it, *Ioel 2. 12, 13.* to the 18. Turne to the Lord with all your hearts, with fasting, weeping, and mourning: Who can tell whether the Lord will

Ioel 2. 12,

13.

will returne, and repente him of the evill ? Marke it, there he speaks as if it were certain, and expresseth himselfe in the next words positively and peremptorily, *He will returne and be mercifull, and leave a blessing behind him.*

For this word *It may be*, as good Interpreters expound it, is not a voice of doubt, but a word of giving : a good intimation and hope of encouragement in what God will doe: so that if the servants of God did but beleeve, it would reach that that themselves desire : For consider brethren, who it is that speaks, and to whom, it is the Lord God,

God, to his humble meek ones ; and it is no more than if a father should say to his child thus: Go doe this and that, labour for mee in this and that service, and *it may be* I will not onely pardon such a failing, wherein you have provoked mee, but I will bestow such a Mannor or Lordship on you, *it may be.*

The child takes this intimation as not spoken in vaine, for though this word be such as a father may break without falsehood, yet he cannot doe it without dishonour. If he speak thus to his child, I will pardon your former failings, and give you this,

this, *it may be*, when hee gives him but a hint of it, the father cannot go back from that word, and not part from his honour withall, though he may doe it without falsehood.

And the reason of that is, because the heart of the child sets his eye upon the promise of his father, and in vertue of that he workes; and for his father to give him a hint, and to make an overture of doing that which hee never means to doe, were very strange. The child still presumes that the father ever meanes better than hee speaks, whether hee threaten, or promise;

he

hee ever presumes, if he
bid him do this and that,
and hee doth it, then cer-
tainly the father will not
goe backe,

So in this, God may
goe back and not falsifie
his word, but he cannot
without some dishonour
to his great Name ; For
God to set his children
upon such a course of
meekenesse, of *righteous-
nesse*, and of *justice*, to
seeke him, and expect
comfort from him, if hee
speake thus to his chil-
dren ; If you doe so, and
so, *It may bee you shall bee
bid, &c* For him to set
them upon such a course,
with such incouragement,
and then never meane to

L accom-

accomplish it, certainly wised
it will not stand with theis w
honour of the Almighty, selfe
though it may stand with son v
his truth.

Againe, it cannot stand cause
with the wisedome of are a
God, and the fatherly sure d
love and bounty of God day o
It is a word of wisedome when
for him to keepe and re people
serve somewhat that hee keepe t
will doe, to quicken his judgen
childrens diligence, and have s
to stir up their spirits to say
more duety, to bee more they
faithfull, and solicitous yet w
please him, this is a specie, the
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of God, and with the why it
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ainly wisedome wherein hee
h the is wont to expresse him-
ghty, selfe ; that is the first rea-
with son why these ought to
be effectuall motives, be-
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one of are *certaine promises* of
therly sure deliverance : Let the
God day of Gods wrath come
dome when it will , if Gods
nd it people set themselves to
hat heeke the Lord, and to seek
ken his judgement , when they
e, and have sought him, though
rits to be say, *It may bee*, before
e mon they goe to the worke,
tous yet when they have done
a specke, then this, *it may bee*,
dome will prove a certaine hi-
erturning place, a sure refuge
orme, to them.

Now a second Reason,
ith the why it ought to be a mo-
wise

Reas. 2.

L 2 tive

tive is this ; Because of our owne undeserving of any promise from God, so that if wee may have but the least hint from God of any mercy, it ought sufficiently to work upon us ; as the King of *Syria* and his servants said one to another, *Behold, we have heard that the Kings of Israel are mercifull Kings, It may be they will save our lives, let us goe with ropes about our necks, and beseech him to shew favour to Benhadad, &c.* What answer received they ; *Is my brother Benhadad alive ?* they tooke hold of that word presently, *my brother Benhadad, thou*

laid hold upon that, the least hint served their turne; why? because they deserved hanging.

So when the servants of *God* come before him, in the shame and guilt of their frailties, and consider how little they have deserved at Gods hands, how justly they have merited his wrath that hee threatneth to a Nation; when they have the least hint, so much as, *It may bee I will bide you*, that is sufficient, if there be no more: In the strength of that wee ought to walke all our dayes constantly, seeking meekenesse, and righteousness, that wee may be hid in the day of

the Lords wrath.

Reas. 3. Thirdly, consider the Nature of God ; God declares himself to Moses, to bee abundant in goodnessse, and in truth abundance is not onely when a vessel is full of water, but when it runneth over the banks ; The Sea is abundant in water when it overflowes the banks, and surrounds all the Countreys where it runs ; Gods goodnessse is not bounded with the truth of his promise, for as hee is good in promising, so hee is not onely true in performing, but hee is abundant in truth ; that is, hee performes all his promise and more : God

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God say, *It may bee*, hee
need not performe his
promise, for his truths
sake, but hee will aboun-
dantly performe it, for
his Names sake, for his
goodnesse sake, for his
wisedomes sake that
knowes no bottome, nor
bounds; when he comes
to deale with his servants
and children, to whom
he hath made so many
sweet promises in Christ
he knowes no limits.

This may serve there-
fore, *first* to be a notable
incouragement to all such
poore Christians, as can
get little hold of any pro-
mise of God; All that
ever they can reach to is
this, that their conscience

Vſe I.

L 4 up-

upholds them with ; It
may be God will have mer-
cy upon my soule that I pe-
rish not ; It may bee hee
will accept my prayers,
and the prayers of many
of his servants, that com-
mend my estate to God,
that my soule perish not
in the nethermost hell ;
It may bee I shall finde
peace and pardon of my
siancs, but it is so strange
for me to expect it, such
an unworthy wretch am
I of such a favourat Gods
hands, that I dare not ex-
pect it ; but who can tell
whether the Lord will
have mercy on my soul ?

I tell thee brother, if
God have reported this
to thee, it may be, he will
shew

shew thee mercy, that thou perish not, and hath formerly framed thee to meeknesse of heart: So as let G O D doe as hee please with thee, yet thou resolvest to submit thy neck to the yoake; let God doe what hee will, thou art meeke in heart, and humble in spirit, thy conscience is tender, and bruised, and sensible of thy former failings; and yet notwithstanding all thy humiliation, and feare of Gods displeasure; all thy sorrow of soule, and shame that thou hast taken to heart; notwithstanding all the care that thou hast taken in the use of the meanes for inward

L 5 peace

peace, yet little is attained, and thou still tremblest to thinke what will become of that poore soule of thine ; who can tell but that the Lord in time will bee mercifull to thee, that thy soule may live.

I say, goe home and goe with this comfort in thy heart, God that hath said, *It may bee, will certainly make it good* ; Go on and seeke the Lord still, and seeke meeknesse, and *righteousnesse*, and judgement still, and feare it not, that *may bee, will be a certaine deliverance, a certaine pardon of sin, a certaine righteousness, and judgement.*

Lord

Lord saith the *Leper*,
Mark. i. 40. *If thou wilt thou canst make me cleane;*
why saith our Saviour, I will, be thou cleane. If once
a soule come in a sence of
its owne leprosie, and lay
open the nakednesse, and
basenesse of the disease
before God (the sinfull-
nesse of it, I meane) for
the leprosie was but a
type of the contagious
spreading of sinne, let us
come and shew our con-
tagion before God, our
filthy, loathsome, spre-
ading evills that our soules
are corrupted with, lay
them open before God,
and tell him, That hee is
able to cleanse thee,
there wants nothing but
a word

Mar. i. 40.

a word of grace from him to doe it, and he will speake to thee, as he did to the leper; *I will be thou cleane*; thou mayest goe home with that word cheared, if it bee but a *halfe promise*, lay hold upon it; If God speake but the least hint of comfort, and though thou commest with a rope about thy neck, acknowledging thy just desert, yet let it bee a sufficient stay to thy heart, to incourage thee; he speaketh that that hee would not intimate, in the least kind, if he did not meane to bee as good as his word; but he is abundantly incomparably more;

he

he is abundant in goodness and truth, as well as faithfull in goodness and truth.

For a second Use, this may serve to stirre up all the children of God, in a speciall manner, to *seeke the Lord, to seeke righteousness, and judgement, and seeke meeknesse,* and that in these times ; If these be the times wherein we ask, *What shall wee now doe ? or what doe you thinke the Lord will doe with us ? or what will be the issue of these things ?* If you have occasion to ask such questions in this or in after ages, that you may live in ; Behold, I say, what the counsell of the

Use.2.

the holy Ghost is, *Seek the Lord, alle yee meeke of the earth,* that thinke you have wrought judgement and have indeed carried things well at home, and in the countries wherein you live: If you have wrought judgement, and meeknesse, and righteousness, marke what the Lord presseth upon you; *Seeke the Lord while hee may bee found,* seeke him more, bee sensible of the want of Gods presence.

Oh the blessed, and comfortable, and glorious presence of God, that sometimes you found when you looked first after him! Have you not found a decay of the grace

grace of God since, or at least of comfort, that you are short of that, that before time you enjoyed? If you feele the least measure of want, or if you feele no want but continue in your first standing (which is few Christians case) for you never see the face of God so clearly but you may see it more, you never received such a measure of grace but you have need of more, to pacifie, and to purifie your conscience, to strengthen grace, & help you to doe that that God calls you to performe.

Seek the Lord still therefore, and seek righteousness, content not your selves with

with that measure of holiness that you are come to, but that your heart and life may be more righteous; there may be many wayes of righteousness that you have not yet sought for, therefore seek righteousness more. And what though you bee already growne to heavenly meekness of spirit, and amiableness and sweetenesse of heart, so as you can moderate your anger and your heat, and griefe, and your high thoughts, and are growne meek and lowe in your own esteem, and finde rest to your soules thereby.

Behold, I say, seek meeknesse still, you will have

have need of all that ever you have attained to, or that you can receive; you know not what need you may have of all; seeke the Lord, that hee may strengthen you to *do* well, and to *suffer* ill; that hee may inlarge you above your selves; seeke the Lord, seeke righteousness, seek meekness, be seekers still, *Psal. 24.* This is the generation of them that seeke him; Jacob is called a *seeker*. The true *Israel*, and the true *Israelites* are all but seekers; Seeke the Lord and his strength, and seek his face for ever and ever; be of the seeking hand. When Christians begin to bee full of God

Psal. 24.

God, then they are empty of that which is carnall, and worldly, and unsavoury; when there are lesse searchings of spirit, and seekings of heart after God, then they begin to grow worldly, and sensuall, and full of themselves: therefore seeke the Lord still, and seeke his strength, not onely the strength of his ordinances in your owne hearts, but seeke the strength and the power of God in all your wayes and undertakings.

Now that you may be encouraged by him to all the duties that hee calls you to in your places, that you may indeed seeke *righteous*.

righteouſneſſe ; ſeek the true meaning of Gods righteous will, and all the waies of his holy Commandements that he hath appointed you to walk in, both in his own Ordinances , and in your particular callings ; Frame your hearts to ſuch a milde and meeke ſpirit, that you may adorne the Gospel of Christ, & not be left to that ſowernesſe and roughneſſe of ſpirit, as ſometimes Gods people are ; ſeek meekneſſe, who can tell, *It may bee*, in the ſtrength of that overture of Gods promise, is a more certaine assurance of your estate then all the promises, and all the assurance, and all the bonds of the ſonnes of men whatſoever.

Thirdly,

Vſe 3.

Thirdly, let me here exhort you, to be in a speciall sort careful the more to believe all the promises of God, the more certainly they bee expressed. There are abundance of promises in the word of G O D that speake affirmatively without any possibilities, or respects of *peradventure*; many times God speaks punctually and plainly what he will doe. There be sundry blessings that he promiseth, (as you may reade, I cannot inlarge them in particular) lay hold of them ; If God speak by way of doubt, yet you may take them for certaine, walking after God, in seeking his will, God will make them all certainly good

good to thy soule.

To conclude, If these *halfe promises*, bee such a certaine foundation of peace and security to Gods people, then you see here how far off they are from seeking *God* that find no comfort in religious wayes, that have no pleasure in seeking after *God*; It is not a vain course which the Cōmon-wealth and this Kingdom have been wont to take many times, to be carefull of settling Religion, and doing good offices to Religion, in the first place. I tell you, it is not a complement, it is not a trifle this, why? because according as the Church is, so stands the Cōmon-wealth, and whole Lands and Kingdomes are wheeled about for

for the Churches sake; therefore it is not a vain course.

Tell not mee of any thing in the world that you may build upon, except you settle your foundation upon the Church of God, for all the world were not able to stand else, not the *Roman* liberties; what more freedome then to be free of the City of *Rome*? though in some things they wanted that freedome that (thanks bee to God) you enjoy, yet notwithstanding all their liberties, what became of them since, were they secured from forrain enemies? No such matter, why? because they wanted the prosperity of the Church amongst them; therfore how should peace hold themselves.

selves, or others? It is not then in vain to begin reformation here.

Well, thus much let me say further; Doe but consider how far every man shall bee from getting a hiding place from Gods wrath that doth not seek *righteousnesse*, and *meeknesse*; all that they can get from God is but this, *It may bee you shall bee hid in the day of the Lords wrath*. What then will be the lot of those that obey not the Gospel of God? that seeke not *righteousnesse*, and *meeknesse* at all, what will be the case of the? without any *may be*, assuredly except Gods people save the soules of such, and their bodies & states by renewing their covenant and standing in.